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GOVERN

Richmond, D

SIR,—I rejoice that the law has now convened the representatives of the
The Congress, of the United States, called by the President, at a period earlier
sequence of circumstances which menaced the peace of our country, still remain
circumstances have been already announced to the nation. Their issue, as yet
from the general government, measures which may require the firm and vigor
the state legislatures. One great object of the establishment of the general gov
vide more effectually, by our united force, for our common defence: One of
that government is to protect each state against invasion. But as in the most w
best administered governments, cases may occur in which individuals will find it
themselves against sudden violence, without waiting for the slow forms of la
extended confederated republic, it will sometimes happen that the danger to a
be so imminent as to require the exertion of its own energies, before the nation
ded for its protection. Such a case has occurred in our own state since your last
of Virginia have been made the theatre of an outrage unprecedented in the his
pursuance of a formal order from a British admiral, founded on a pretension op
ciple of the acknowledged law of nations, and striking vitally at the independ
country, a public armed vessel of the United States, leaving her port on a dis
the 22d day of June, followed by one of those vessels of war which had been
our harbors, and were at that moment enjoying the benefits of our hospitality,
sight of our own shores, had several of her crew killed and wounded, four
herself disabled from proceeding. This outrage was followed up by others wh
norous in atrocity, or not conducted to so tragical an end, manifested an eq
rights and a spirit of more determined and systematic hostility. The ships Le
own harbors, had watched the frigate Chesapeake, had followed her out of the
immediately returned, bringing with her the trophies of her lawless triumph a
tion, and rejoined the British squadron then lying in Lynhaven Bay on
modore Douglass, with the whole squadron, took his station in Hampton Ro
purpose of blockading the town of Norfolk; a purpose that was but partially fulfil
so far as to permit no vessel to pass without examination. These circumstances
menacing Language of the British Commodore, and the still more menacing act
a very considerable distance, the channel of Elizabeth River leading to Norfol
no doubt of his intention to attack that town. Indeed after what had already o
ficult to conjecture the limits to which he intended to confine his hostilities.
Virginia, receiving the earliest and most prompt information of this state of
their duty to provide instantly for the protection of the country.... Accordingly
Force believed to be competent, was directed to be immediately stationed at Nor
and orders were given to the Brigadier Generals commanding the militia bord
peake Bay and our principal rivers, to organize other detachments, to be held
the field in case events waraing....These measures were communicated without
dent of the United States; but previously to his receiving that communication,
ed from other sources, of the occurrences in the vicinity of Norfolk, and deem
provide for the defence of that place and the protection of the state, had on the
the Executive to order into immediate service, at the expense of the United St
of the militia as might be thought necessary and most convenient for these obj
on the Chesapeake, had excited in every description of our fellow-citizens th
one universal sentiment of the strongest indignation.... All private or party dif
a sense of our violated rights as a nation, and in the firmest resolution to co-op
of life and property, in whatever measures of redress the constituted authorit
But, when this outrage was followed up by the menacing attitude assumed by
in the very bosom of our country, by the blockade of our principal commerce
prospect of its immediate attack, the militia in every part of the state, animat
and incensed with the highest resentment and the most ardent enthusiasm, m
their services; and each corps implored to be the first to be accepted. The v
City, from Petersburg and from Williamsburg, deserve the applause of their
exemplary alacrity with which they marched to the aid of their fellow-citiz
the militia that were in service, at Norfolk, at Hampton, and at Lynhaven
burning zeal, that determined resolution which the nation will always delight t
leaders.

Amidst a display of patriotism so ardent and so universal, it may not be esp

VERNOR'S LETTER.

Richmond, December 8. 1807.

e representatives of the people of Virginia. dent, at a period earlier than usual, in con- our country, still remains in session. These on. Their issue, as yet uncertain, may call quire the firm and vigorous co-operation of nment of the general government was to pro- mmon defence: One of the great duties of . But as in the most wisely organized and h individuals will find it necessary to defend or the slow forms of law, so in our widely en that the danger to a particular state may ergies, before the national arm can be exten- own state since your last session. The capes unprecedented in the history of nations....In nded on a pretension opposed to every prin- g vitally at the independence of every other aving her port on a distant service, was on of war which had been kindly received into efits of our hospitality, was attacked within ed and wounded. Four taken from her, and followed up by others which altho' not ac- nostility. The ship Leopard, which, in our followed her out of them and attacked her, of her lawless triumph and of our degrada- haven B[illegible] on the 3d of July, com- station in H[illegible] Roads, for the avowed that was but [illegible] executed, at least n. These circumstances [illegible] to the very still more mortifying [illegible] sounding, for River leading to Norfol[illegible] seemed to leave after what had already occurred, [illegible] continue his hostilities. The Executive of- peration of this state of things, deemed it contrary....Accordingly on the 6th July, a stately stationed at Norfolk and Hampton; ing the militia bordering on the Chesa- detachments, to be held in readiness to take communicated without delay, to the Presi- ng that communication, he had been inform- ty of Norfolk, and deeming it necessary to of the state, had on the 8th July, called on spense of the United States, such portions convenient for these objects. The outrage our fellow-citizens throughout the state All private or party differences were lost in nest resolution to co-operate, at the sacrifice he constituted authorities should adopt.— ng attitude assumed by the British squadron, our principal commercial towns, and by the of the state, animate[illegible] the same soul, eat enthusiasm, more voluntary tenders of o be accepted. The volunteers from this the applause of their country for the very of their fellow-citizens; and the whole of on, and at Lynhaven Bay manifested that ion will always delight to behold in its de- rsal, it may not be expected that I should scale, just, but humane, and having, moreover, in the application of this scale to particular offen- ces, allowed to the juries a wide range for regulating it according to the circumstances attending each individual case, it was believed that the great purposes of public justice requiring that punish- ments should be inflicted, certainly and inflexibly, according to the law as pronounced by the judg- ments of our courts. But the convicts, seeing themselves thus doomed to confinement and labour which no act of theirs could tend to shorten or mitigate, and nothing terminable but the slow lapse of time itself, were deprived of all hope. They lost the only incentive to correct conduct which could be expected to influence hearts already wicked or depraved, the prospect of advantage or interest. They manifested the most unruly spirit, and vicious dispositions, which were restrained only by the certainty of immediate punishment—They were unceasingly engaged in [illegible] concerting plans for effecting their escape, in the accomplishment of which, they sometimes contemplated even the murder of the Keeper and his family, and the destruction of the building—The Executive determined at length to pursue a course different from that before adopted; they occasionally selected, as objects of mercy and pardon, those of the convicts, most remarkable for their industry, orderly conduct, and uniform submission to the regulations of the Institution, whilst they invariably turned a deaf ear to the petitions of those of an opposite character, even where their claims to mercy were warmly and strongly urged by numerous and highly respectable characters from without. The motives to such intercessions were known to be correct, and were duly appreciated by the Executive; but they could not permit their decisions to be influenced by any other considerations than those arising from the good conduct of the convicts themselves: and it was distinctly communicated that the spirit of insubordination to the laws, manifested by attempts to escape from the confinement and punishment which they prescribe, would be considered as affording an incontestible proof that the discipline of the Penitentiary had not yet produced its desired effect, the reformation of the offenders; and that under such circumstances, pardon would be solicited in vain.—This change of policy was no sooner announced, than its effects were manifested in the changed conduct and deportment of the convicts; by which, each seemed now desirous to recommend himself to the attention of the Executive.

In the performance of their duties in relation to the Penitentiary, the Executive acknowledge, with pleasure, the great advantages they have derived from the co-operation of the twelve respectable gentlemen who, as Visitors, at the request of the Executive, and without any other inducement than the laudable desire of rendering a public service, have undertaken regularly to visit the Penitentiary, to superintend its operations, and to suggest to the Executive such improvements as experience and observation shall dictate. Mr. Abraham Douglass, formerly of Philidelphia, who was appointed Keeper on the resignation of Mr. Mims, to a long acquaintance with all the details of such an establishment, and a knowledge of the great principles on which it is founded, adds, it is believed, that steady uniformity of temper, that benevolence and humanity of heart, and that energy of character, so necessary in the Keeper of such an institution. He devotes an undivided and unremitting attention to its interests, and [illegible] to [illegible] which can be expected from such a establishment. The philanthropist will not be assailed by the objection of the economist, that these advantages are purchased too dearly, by the extravagant expenditure of the public treasure. I enclose the general account between the Commonwealth and the Penitentiary for the period commencing the 1st day of April (when the present Keeper commenced his duties) and ending the 30th day of November, drawn upon the principles which have heretofore regulated similar estimates, and exhibiting a balance in favor of the institution, of 10,370 dollars and 91 cents. In order, however, to ascertain the real profits of the establishment, it will be necessary to deduct from this sum, the amount of the salaries of the officers, and of some incidental expenses, the whole of which cannot, it is believed, exceed $2,600, and will leave at least $7,700 clear gain for the institution, in the short space of eight months. A detailed statement of the operations, in the different branches of manufacture, will be embraced by a subsequent but early communication.

I submit herewith the report of Charles Beale and Joseph Gripsby, Esquires, on the subject of the road directed to be opened from the upper navigation of James river, to the upper navigation of Kanawa river, made in pursuance of an act of the last Assembly. I also enclose a report on the same subject, made in the year 1805 by Charles Arbuckle and James Anderson, jun. esq'rs. as before referred to by that just mentioned; together with a statement of the expenditures of public money on this object. I am sorry to observe that it is so far from being completed, as in its present state, to afford but few advantages. The Executive will not fail to do their duty, as prescribed by the act of the last session; but, the farther interposition of the legislature will be necessary, and their attention is invited to the subject. This road is highly necessary to the accommodation of a large portion of our fellow-citizens, and must [illegible] the best chain of connexion between the navigation of the eastern and western waters of our own state, but, perhaps, the most advantageous channel

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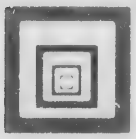

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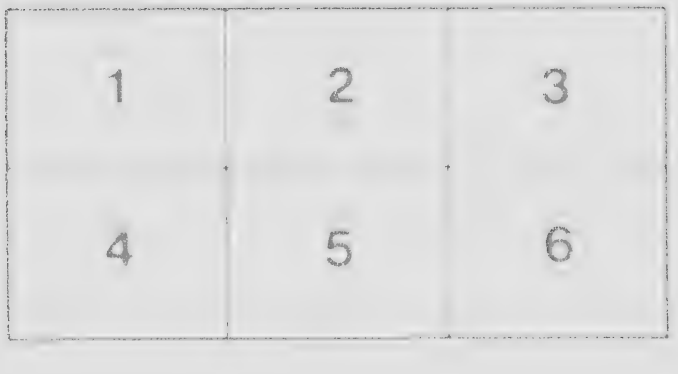

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prospect of its immediate attack, the militia in every part of the state, animated and filled with the highest resentment and the most ardent enthusiasm, pressed their services; and each corps implored to be the first to be accepted. The volunteers from Petersburg and from Williamsburg, deserve the applause of their country for the exemplary alacrity with which they marched to the aid of their fellow-citizens [illegible] the militia that were in service, at Norfolk, at Hampton, and at Lynhaven [illegible] burning zeal, that determined resolution which the nation will always delight to [illegible] tenders.

And let a display of patriotism so ardent and so universal, it may not be expected [illegible] that any particular portion of our fellow-citizens—But I feel myself impelled to pay, to the inhabitants of Norfolk, Portsmouth and Hampton, that tribute which I think them so justly and so eminently entitled—They saw, arranged in hostile opposition, to which, deeds of violence and of wrong had become familiar [illegible] and expected, every moment, a destructive attack, to which, they were [illegible] opposing effectual resistance—It was, with them, a time that tried [illegible] they proved themselves equal to the trial—Their unshaken firmness and combat [illegible] every Virginian proud to own them as his countrymen.

[illegible] to proceed—the British squadron did not make an attack [illegible] Its manner, however, is of national authority [illegible] and [illegible] vessels that remained within the Capes of Virginia, and about the mouth of James River and out of our jurisdiction.

The President of the United States, at a very early period after the [illegible] aggressions, required of the Executive to organize, arm and equip, and hold in [illegible] field at a moment's warning, eleven thousand five hundred men, [illegible] of the militia of Virginia, as our quota of a detachment of 100,000 called for from the United States. The acceptance of volunteers under the acts of Congress of the 18th [illegible] 24th February 1807, the former requiring a service of six months, the latter, [illegible] and the volunteers accepted under either, or both laws, [illegible] to be considered, as to their numbers, as part of the quota required from this state. The Executive took [illegible] necessary measures for complying with this requisition. The [illegible] was completed; but I have real pleasure in assuring the General Assembly, from the [illegible] that it is believed the whole of the quota of Virginia will consist of those who, [illegible] patriotism, made to their country voluntary tenders of their services.

The last Legislature directed that a certain number of the public arms should be [illegible] Armory, and that all the others, after arming the militia of certain towns and [illegible] districts among the different regiments of the Commonwealth, according to their [illegible] strength. The Executive had commenced the performance of this duty, for which [illegible] period is in consequence of the aggressions of the British squadron. A discretion [illegible] prescribed, would have left too much exposed that part of the State then [illegible] with invasion. Moreover, it was believed that the requisition of the President [illegible] made it necessary for each state to arm its own quota. I trust therefore that the [illegible] Executive, in suspending the general distribution, will be approved by the Legislature.

The operations of the Manufactory of Arms have been conducted with the [illegible] of [illegible] zealous zeal and indefatigable exertions of the Superintendant [illegible] and Foreman. A detailed report of its operations is in a state of preparation [illegible] day be submitted to the view of the Legislature.

By a law of the last General Assembly, the Penitentiary Establishment was [illegible] under the immediate superintendence of the Executive. They duly estimated the importance of [illegible] have effected a radical change in the rules and regulations of the Institution. [illegible] like the present, nothing more will be expected than a statement of the general [illegible] with such observations [illegible] the General Assembly, that, that result is equal to [illegible] the most ardent admirers of this benevolent and humane institution. The [illegible] system have been introduced into every department; the health of the prisoners [illegible] superior to that of any equal number of persons in any other situation whatsoever; [illegible] with very few exceptions, has been marked by industry and a ready submission to [illegible] regulations prescribed for their government, and it is believed that, in many instances, [illegible] been returned to the community with renewed dispositions, principles and habits [illegible] them useful citizens.—One fact, in relation to this Institution, is believed to be [illegible] It is the extraordinary effect produced on the convicts generally, by the well [illegible] pardons to those, who have been distinguished for the uniform propriety of their [illegible] confinement, or who have afforded proofs of a reformation of character. [illegible] On the contrary, the instances were rare indeed in which the Executive [illegible] exercise the power of pardon: for the law having wisely apportioned punishments

Kanawha river, made in pursuance of an act of the last session. I also enclose a report on the same subject, made in the year 1807 by Charles Arbuckle and James Anderson, jun. esqrs. as referred to by that just mentioned; together with a statement of the expenditures of public money on this object. I am sorry to observe that it is so far from being completed, as in its present state, to afford but few advantages. The Executive will not fail to do their duty, as prescribed by the act of the last session: but, the farther interposition of the legislature will be necessary, and their attention is invited to the subject. This road (highly necessary to the accommodation of a large portion of our fellow citizens, and many [illegible], not only the best chain of connexion between the navigation of the eastern and western waters of our own state, but, perhaps, the most advantageous channel for communicating the commerce of the Atlantic to the Mississippi and its vast tributary streams. At a time when the operation of a law of Congress is about to suspend almost the whole of our commercial intercourse with particular nations, from which we have heretofore drawn our principal supplies, and when we are threatened with a war, which would materially affect the whole of our foreign commerce, every circumstance that will facilitate the communication between the remote parts of our country, and extend and improve our internal navigation, merits the serious attention of the legislature. In this view, the Dismal Swamp Canal, connecting the extensive waters of the Chesapeake Bay, with those of Albemarle Sound, will become a very important object, on which the public mind must feel a deep interest. I expect to receive, in the course of a few days, more particular information on the state of this canal than I now possess, and I shall take pleasure in communicating it to the Assembly.

I am not sensible that there is any circumstance in relation to any of the other public works or establishments, that requires to be made the subject of particular communication: but, should the Legislature want any information in respect to any of them, or to any part of the administration of the government, I shall take pleasure in imparting it, as far as may be in my power.

If the present unsettled state of our foreign relations ought to withdraw from ordinary attention to subjects relating to internal navigation and domestic commerce, how much more will occurs influence in exhorting us to be prepared for defending our dearest rights against foreign aggression. In every age, and in every state of society, the means, the best mode of exercising war, is to be prepared to repel it, has been admitted to be the part of wisdom. If there could heretofore have been a doubt on this subject, that doubt will be removed forever, by the history of the present times. We might, in confirmation of this truth, refer to recent occurrences in Europe, in which we have no further interest, than to profit from the instructive lessons they afford. But we need not go beyond the limits of our own experience. We have run the longest period of peace, and the most scrupulous regard to justice, have not preserved us from the most humiliating insults and the most aggravated wrongs; and the clouds which we may see collecting in our horizon, indicate the approaching storm of war—that if we cannot avert it, let us be prepared to meet it—supported by the conscious rectitude of our cause, and animated by the spirit of freemen, let us diligently cultivate every art, and provide ourselves with every means, which will make that spirit formidable. The important institution of our Manufactory of Arms has never yet been put into that extensive operation of which it is capable. With an adequate appropriation of money by the Legislature, we might annually double the number of arms heretofore manufactured. Supplied with these ample quantities which might be thus furnished, the militia of Virginia, animated by the purest patriotism, would want nothing but the advantages of discipline, to confirm the maxim of republicanism, by affording "the proper, natural and safe defence of a free state"—and while we are referring to Europe for examples to teach the mournful necessity of a constant preparation for war, might it not be proper to enquire by what arts, and by what system of tactics, one nation has been able to triumph over almost all others in that quarter of the globe? I suppose, that the cause of her triumphs will be found to originate in the advantages derived from her military schools. Might it not be proper to enquire, how far we also, might derive advantages from similar institutions, under the patronage of the Legislature. On this important subject, I do not venture to pronounce an opinion; it is for the decision of the General Assembly.

I perform a melancholy duty in announcing to the Legislature the death of Mr. Lewis Harvie; respected for his virtues, and mourned for his talents. By this lamented event, a vacancy is occasioned in the Privy Council, and our country has lost a citizen who promised to become, at no distant period, one of her rarest ornaments.

I enclose the Auditor's official statement of the revenue for the year 1806, accompanied with an account of the expenditures, and also a list of balances due from Sheriffs and Collectors.—There are several other subjects of importance which I shall embrace an early opportunity to submit to the General Assembly.

I am with the highest respect for yourself and the body over which you preside, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

WM. H. CABELL.

The honorable the SPEAKER *of the House of Delegates.*